By DEREK RICE

HOUSTON — Like most places in the country, the Houston area has seen a lot of golf course development in the last decade. As a result, most of the projects that are underway now, according to Richard Luikens, a consultant for Richard Luikens Golf Services, are renovations.

"In the Houston area, we've had such an influx in the last five to seven years. Thirty to 40 new facilities have opened up, and that's tapering off," Luikens said. "I can only think of three golf courses that are under construction in the Houston area right now, and there is not a lot of talk of many more."

One Luikens project that is underway is a renovation of Lakeside Country Club. The $2 million project broke ground on Feb. 11 and has a reopening target date of July 15. The project includes complete renovation of the greens, replacement of the entire concrete cart path system and expansion of the irrigation system. Luikens is working with general contractor Wadsworth Construction, architect Ron Prichard and superintendent Terry Hutcherson on the project.

The timetable is important to Luikens, said, because until mid-July the club's membership has no place to play.

"We spent a lot of time and effort putting the schedules together and getting the contractor in place and the materials in place so that we can turn the golf course back to the membership in a very short time," he said.

At the moment, members are forced to

Pistol Creek looks to videotape
By JOHN TORSIELLO

BERLIN, Conn. — The owners of recently opened Pistol Creek Golf Club here have come up with unique marketing strategies to make play more enjoyable and keep golfers at the club once they finish their rounds.

Pistol Creek, which opened this month, has cameras located near the 18th green that capture approach shots and action around the hole. The tape is shown on a 15-minute delay in the club's restaurant and lounge.

"It's just a fun thing to do," said Gary Schiarrillo, president of the Milford-based GRS Group, which developed, owns and manages the new course. "Whether you have a great round or a mediocre one, being able to go into the grill room and watch yourself finish extends your round a little further. To my knowledge it isn't being done anywhere else."

The owners of Pistol Creek say they have further made their course player-friendly by limiting the total number of annual rounds to around 29,000 to ensure speedy play.

"We are limiting the rounds because we want people to get around the course in no longer than four and a half hours," said Schiarrillo, whose company was the consultant and project manager for Great River Golf Club in Milford.

"We're taking a more long-range view rather than filling as many tee times as possible. We want to have a pleasurable experience and come back."

To monitor pace of play, cameras will be installed at several key locations on the course. Golfers will not be let out until the previous group is on the first green. Rangers will patrol the course displaying a series of flags informing groups of their pace.

"We feel the flag system is a non-confrontational way to handle course patrol," said Schiarrillo. "Green means everything is OK, yellow means you're a little slow, and red means pick it up and move to the next one.

Spencer building the course of his dreams
By DEREK RICE

TOLEDO, Ohio — Denny Spencer of Spencer Golf Concepts will be the first to tell you that, "The Golf Club at Saddlebarn is heating up"

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